

Philosophy 4, Introduction to Ethics
Summer B, 2009
Instructor: Wally Siewert

Paper Prompt #2

In her discussion of abortion J.J. Thomson focuses on what precisely it may mean to have a “Right to Life.” She proposes several definitions, finding problems with the first two and settling on a third. **Present** and **explain** the first two definitions as well as their inadequacies. Finally, **present** and **explain** the third and final definition she proposes.

With respect to the third definition J.J. Thomson accepts that *under certain circumstances* respecting a right to life thus defined could weigh against the moral permissibility of an abortion (hint: how does the mother’s level of responsibility for the presence of the fetus affect permissibility). **Present** and **explain** J.J. Thomson’s (admittedly vague) view regarding what kind of circumstances might, or might not, justify such a conclusion against abortion.

Do you agree with her view? If so, explain why: and is there possibly some interesting way in which we might make her claims more specific? If you don’t agree, explain why not.

Suggested Outline:

One paragraph of introduction. This is short and to the point, simply a few sentences telling the reader what the focus and intent of the paper is.

Section 1. 1-1.5 pages:

Present and explain all three proposed definitions. Use your paragraph structure to distinguish each definition and explanation.

Section 2. 1.5-2 pages:

Present and explain Thomson’s view on the connection between her accepted definition of a “right to life,” the mother’s level of responsibility for the pregnancy, and the permissibility of abortion. (In the interests of space you can ignore her distinction between “indecent” and “impermissible”)

Present and explain your own view **on this specific issue** and how it coincides or differs from Thomson’s.

Useful tips on back!!!

Useful tips:

1. Use 12 point font.
2. Double spaced.
3. Write early and revise!!!!
4. Organize, organize, organize.

5. Write clear, short, to the point sentences. Don't worry about bridge paragraphs or niceties, stick to the point!
6. Are all the relevant elements of an explanation/argument present?
7. Are they all explained adequately?
8. Are all the questions on the prompt answered?
9. Do not copy explanations from my notes! The purpose is to **show you understood the material**, you do that by putting it in your own words!
10. Is the paper **at minimum**, a **full** 3 pages?
11. Come to office hours or email questions!!!!!!
12. For direct quotes from the text just indicate in parentheses what page in the textbook the quote is from like this: "I propose, then, that we grant that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception." (p. 93).